

The CHRISTIAN. X

1609/617.

A

S E R M O N

ON THE

Words of *King* AGRIPPA to St. PAUL,

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

By ROBERT WHATLEY,

Rector of *Toft* near *Lincoln*, and Prebendary of *York*.

Be instant in Season, Out of Season. 2 Tim. iv. 2.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed by DAN. BROWNE,

For M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-noster Row*.

MDCCXLIX.

THE CHRISTIAN

S E R M O N

ON THE
Words of King David
"Almighty thou hast made me to be as a lion"

By ROBERT WHALLEY,

Pastor of the New Church, and Prebendary of York.

Be it remembered, that in the year 1841, in the

THE SECOND EDITION



L O N D O N

Printed by Dan. Brown,
For M. Cooper, at the Office in Newgate Street.
MILNER

TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
THE
Lord Bishop of *DURHAM*.

MY LORD,

Toft, May 10, 1746.

THE Acceptance this little Discourse has met with, as I have, occasionally, preach'd it, has often rais'd in me the Thought of sending it into the World, by itself, a sort of voluntary free-will Offering for its Service. Not from any Merit there is, or can be, in it, in my own, or any other Person's Opinion, as a Composition, but to further that Good, which, such as it is, it has had the Happiness of being thought calculated to promote, by some of its occasional Hearers, of whose sincere Piety, and most eminent Christianity I have the highest Assurance. And when I resolv'd on this, I thought humbly consigning it into your LORDSHIP's Hands, might not be judg'd unnatural in me, nor unacceptable to your LORDSHIP, whilst I am not guilty of the Presumption, for the sake of palliating any of its Imperfections, but to grace, recommend, and enforce whatever may be esteem'd worthy of Forgiveness in it.

But I have a more particular Reason for the Liberty I take with your LORDSHIP, on this Occasion. The Point which it chiefly presses, viz. "The habituating ourselves to dwell on our Title to Immortality, The connecting in our Thoughts our endless Reversion in another State of Being, with our temporary, casual, Possession of this," has been so frequently the Subject of the private Conversations, with which your LORDSHIP has, for so many Years, occasionally honoured me, that it is little else, than returning your LORDSHIP your Own, to send it to You; drawn up, however, (it is to be remembred) by my imperfect Pen, not by your LORDSHIP's masterly one.

Your LORDSHIP knows how much, and how long * it has been my Opinion, (and I have always had your LORDSHIP's concurring with me in it) "That it becomes every rational Creature, conscious of his Being, to make the Consideration of "What the Nature and Extent of it is, the first Object of any Capacity he has of exerting his rational Powers." As,

* See a Letter to a Benchet, &c.

“ to make it as happy to him, as he can, is, and ought, avowedly, to be the principal one.”

Now the great Point, or very Git of the Christian Religion, appears to me to be, “ That it abolishes Death, and restores Us to, what I may call, “ a natural Immortality.” That great Adversary of human Nature, of whose original and hostile Intercourse with Mankind We have some (tho’ very imperfect) Glimmerings given us in holy Writ, may be said to have got a Point against Us in our Death, but it may be said as truly, that Christ, his great Antagonist obtain’d a much greater for Us, in a Resurrection from it. Now whatever has befallen to Christ, in this Respect, in his Time, is most notoriously, from the Scripture, to befall his Followers in Theirs. “ — Christ the first Fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s, at his coming.” — And yet I appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, “ How little the Thought of so glorious, so certainly “ glorious a Reversion of Existence, after an Extinction of our present “ Being, occupies, much less grounds itself in the Mind of those, who by “ their Profession of Christians, are most manifestly entitled to it, and ought “ to look on it, as much their own, by virtue of such Profession, as that “ which they are actually in Possession of; and as they naturally live to the “ one, ought, if they wou’d act consistently, as readily to die to the other.”

But that this is not the common Course of the Christian World is likewise very apparent. Notwithstanding they have liv’d in the constant Belief of it for perhaps fifty, sixty, or seventy Years, it is, often, with Regret that the best of Men go to take Possession of so great an Inheritance. To obviate this Weakness, is another View I shall appear more indirectly to have in the following Leaves; for it, naturally, arises from my first. I have said but little to that particular of these two, of which I have said most. But I think (and it is all I profess to have done) that what I have said of them, however briefly, must put my attentive Reader in the Humour of thinking more, for himself, on both.

I refer, MY LORD, hitherto, to the better Sort of Christians. Those who, in some measure, understand their Religion, and who, in their Lives and Conversations endeavour to live up to it.

But what must I say of “ How the Case stands with the generality of “ those who bear the sacred Name of Christian,” of all Ranks, and Degrees of Men, as to any Sense in their Minds, “ What that Religion is “ they profess, what the glorious Expectancies it holds out to them are, “ and how they order their Lives in view of being Inheritors of them?” The Ignorance of the (so called) Christian World, in general, seems to me, to be thicker than Egyptian Darkness. Nor can I be persuaded that the
generality



generality of Christian People in our Nation carry about with them " a greater Sense of God, of the moral Government of themselves, in their Words, and Actions, under his Inspection, or any consistent fix'd Moti- on of a future State that really is ingrafted on their Natures," Than the Heathen Usufructuaries of the same Spot of Earth they occupy did before them. * And when they come to die, " It is, equally, a forced Put, a Leap in the Dark they know not where."

Whence it is, MY LORD, that Men in a Christian Country, Christians themselves in Profession, are yet so little Christians I leave others to guess; but whencesoever it arises, the Profaneness, (by which I mean, that most detestable Practice of cursing and swearing at every turn) Lewdness, and Impiety, and extreme Ignorance of our Religion in the World is to be seen and felt, and ought to be confess'd and lamented by all. One uncontradictable Evidence of the prevailing deplorable Ignorance, is, "The little real Happiness that there is, confess'dly, to be met with, among all Ranks and Degrees of People, of either Sex."

A Christian was never intended to wait for the Happiness of Heaven till he came thither, he was to have it in hand, here, tho' the Glory of it was to be reserved for him, till hereafter. But what heterogeneous and inconsistent Means of Happiness are pursued by those who as little disbelieve Christianity (notwithstanding our pretended modish Infidelity) in their Minds, as by their Lives they seem to believe it? And as for any superior Knowledge of the inestimable Prize of their high Calling as Christians, the (so called) Christian English World, from the Highest to the Lowest, seem to be no more appriz'd of it (their publick Pursuits and Diversions being, for the most part, absolutely inconsistent with any such Knowledge) than the wild Indians, on the first Discovery of America, were of the Value of their native Gold, whilst they barter'd it away for Bits of Brass, and Tinsel.

What has the pretended (I say pretended, for there are very few of the Pretenders to Infidelity, that have Sense enough to be real) Infidels, What has the Debauchee, What the Voluptuous, the Profane, the Lewd, the Worldling, What is the Produce of our Masquerades, Ridotto's, everlasting Cardings, in our Routs, Riots, Drums, Hurricanes, Tumults, &c. &c. (— Words a Man cannot commit to writing, without Blushing at the Folly of them) but Comforts of the Value of Bits of Brass and Tinsel, a few Beads, or Pieces of Looking-Glass in lieu of the

* I desire here, and in what follows, to be taken right. Particular Exceptions, undoubtedly, there are who think and act, consequentialy, as to Religion, as all Men are wont to do in other Matters, and I pray Heaven to encrease their Number. But the general Case is as I state it.

Satisfaction arising to a serious Mind, from the inexpressible Glory and Happiness the Christian Religion holds out to its Professors, in Futurity, and the solid Consolation it never fails to give a sincere Professor in Hand?

*What are our Bibles become, which contain so great a Treasure, and are the everlasting Source of such sincere Delight to those who know how to use them, but hardly to be admitted part of our Household Furniture, or, if they are bought in, laid out of Sight, and rarely ever made use of? What is the Lord's-Day itself, become, that was weekly intended to anticipate Heaven, and to put us for the seventh part of our Time, here, as it were, in Possession of that which we are to pass Eternity in, (if we were what we should be,) but, to Gentle and Simple, alike, the idlest Day of the Seven, to be slept, debauched, or journeyed, or * hurricaned away!*

If the following Discourse, MY LORD, accredited and authorized by your LORDSHIP's great and truly venerable Name, as to its Well-meaningness, not to any of its Imperfections, should happen to awaken any of its Readers, either Male or Female, out of that Lethargy and Stupor they are in, as to the real Concern of an immortal Being, I shall think myself very happy; nor will, I am persuaded, be indifferent to your LORDSHIP, The Accessoriness which you have toward so great a Good, by my Presumption.

That your LORDSHIP may long live the Glory of your venerable Order, that your singular Humanity, Sweetness of Temper, as well as your great personal and truly pastoral Abilities, may be copied by all who shall come after You, down through all succeeding Ages, and when in God's good Time you are taken from us (to the inestimable Grief of those You honour with Your Friendship, and to mine in particular should it be my Hap to survive You) to possess the Reward that is laid up for the Righteous, may it be with an Euthanasia, is and will be the earnest Prayer of

MY LORD,

Your LORDSHIP's most dutiful Son,

and most highly Obligated, most

Obedient, and most humble Servant,

ROBERT WHATLEY.

* A confused meeting of Company of both Sexes on Sundays, is called a Hurricane.

The CHRISTIAN.

ACTS XXVI. 28.

Then AGRIPPA *said unto* PAUL, "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*"

YOU all, I am persuaded, know so well on what Occasion these Words were spoken, that it would be very unnecessarily spending your Time to enlarge upon it. St. PAUL, in the course of his Ministry was obliged often to answer for himself, in preaching the blessed Tidings of the Gospel; and, here, is brought before AGRIPPA and FESTUS (the *one* a King of part of Judea, the *other* a Roman Governor over the rest) on the same Account. We find him in Chapter the 24th accused before another Governor, for being a *pestilent Fellow*, a *Mover of Sedition*, a *Prophaner of the Temple*—and what not? He there makes his Defence in such a Manner as to get the better of his Accusers, in part; as that though he is not set at liberty, he is not condemned.—Nay, brings his Judge, in part, over to him. For as he *reasoned of Righteousness*, or Justice, of *Temperance*, or (as the Word more particularly denotes,) Chastity, and a *Judgment to come*, FELIX, (the Governor, before whom he pleads his Cause, being a great Oppressor, and notoriously a very *lewd Man*) *trembled*. This could never have been if FELIX had not thought there was some Truth in what St. PAUL had laid before him. Tho' the Power and Prevalence of his Corruptions were

were so great as to hinder him from submitting to the Apostle's Doctrine, yet the Light of that great *Vicerent* of God in us all, *Conscience*, was not so obscured in him, tho' a meer Heathen, as not to reproach him for the well-known Wickedness of his Life, and on the Apostle's Representation strike an Awe into him at the Consequences of it.

And as he halv'd it in his Mind with respect to *himself*, so he did in his Judgment with respect to St. PAUL. He neither condemns him nor sets him at Liberty, but keeps him in Prison, and there FESTUS, his Successor, finds him; who in the *Chapter* of my *Text* calls him before himself, and joins in Judgment with him King AGRIPPA.—The Consequence of St. Paul's Sermon seems to be much the same, here, as in the *Chapter* before mentioned. His Discourse in Justification of himself, and of the holy Religion he professes, meets with the same *Friend* and the same *Foe* in one of his Judges, at least, King AGRIPPA.—“*Almost* thou persuadest me to be a *Christian*.”—“*Almost*, not quite, indeed, but I am to a degree, persuaded of the Truth of what you say. I have something within telling me that all you say of a *Judgment to come*, and the Reasons, you urge from thence for our living soberly, righteously, and godly, cannot be all Delusion, or meer Cant and Enthusiasm.—Tho' I cannot readily bring myself to submit to the Truth of it, I have something *within* suggesting to me, that all this hangs very well together, and tho' your Doctrine of a Renovation of Life after Death, by a Resurrection of the Body itself, be, indeed, *new* to me, it *must*, I am sensible, be *within* the Power of him that gave Life to change it, wholly to take it away, or restore it at his Pleasure.”—Then AGRIPPA said unto PAUL, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*.

Alas! (methinks, I hear you all say,) what Harm had it been to him, if he had suffered himself *quite* to have become so?—This is a natural Reflection to arise in all our Minds on reading this Passage of King AGRIPPA, and yet at the same time, how little do we think what but *almost* Christians, we may be *Ourselves*! There is more or less in all of Us, what we find, on this Occasion, in King AGRIPPA. The holy Doctrines of the Gospel meeting with the same *Friend* and same *Foe* in human Nature, in general, as we find it did in him; and tho' we may not carry Things so far, as with King AGRIPPA to let the *Foe* within us to it, cause us totally to reject it, yet it is too much to be feared, that many of the outward Professors of our holy Religion carry an evil Heart of Unbelief within them, and either from a Want of due Consideration “What it is to be a Christian,” What the *Pri-*
vileges

Privileges and *Prerogatives* are of being such, or by Reason of the Opposition of the carnal Mind to its holy Precepts, do not heartily embrace it, so as to express the *Sincerity* of their *Belief*, (the only Way it can be truly express'd) by a *suitable Life* and *Conversation*.

Ignorance has been said to be the Mother of Devotion; but, as I conceive, very improperly: For what can that Devotion be that is not grounded on Knowledge? But if in any Sense it can be said to be the Mother of Devotion, tho' in a very abusive one, it can, on the other hand, very properly and very justly be said, that it is wholly owing to *Ignorance* that there is so much Impiety and Prophaneness, and so little true Religion and Devotion in the Christian World; and, in particular, that the Christian Religion, the only Religion, in itself, worthy of Man, when (as it may be with us) it is professed in its Purity, has any profess'd Opposers in its genuine Faith and Practice. There being nothing that makes so much of human Nature as *it*, if Regard be had to the Exaltation and Refinement of our true Happiness in this present State, nothing that has greater Evidence for its certain Truths, or that holds out to us so great and so assured a Consolation from a future Prospect.

I hope I shall not be thought to make an ill use of the Words I have read to you of King AGRIPPA, if I take Occasion from them to put you briefly in Mind, "What it is to be a Christian," laying before you some of the *Privileges* and *Prerogatives* of being so, but of being so not what AGRIPPA said of himself he was, "An *almost* Christian;" but such a one as St. PAUL wish'd he was, and which if he were now alive would wish Us every one to be, not only an *almost* but an *altogether* such. By which we shall see what King AGRIPPA lost, by not *wholly* assenting and giving himself up to it, and what *We* ourselves shall incur the Danger of losing, if, through an Heart of Unbelief, or evil Practice, we suffer ourselves, notwithstanding our outward Profession, to fall short of.

"To be a Christian," is to be entitled to a Resurrection from the Dead, and to live eternally with God in Glory. It is to be put in the same Condition as if we had never *sin'd*, nor ever *died*. *Christ* came to do away the Guilt of Sin in his faithful Disciples, and to destroy Death the Wages of it.

Death and *Sin* are the unnatural State of any of God's rational Creatures.—God created us all for Immortality and Glory. But without enquiring, how it came to be otherwise, or that *Sin* and *Death* got hold of us, or attend our Natures (fruitless, uncertain, and unnecessary

unnecessary Subject of Contention, never *clearly* revealed to us,) the *Fact* being plain of our Liableness to Mortality, the *Disease* of Sin, well known and acknowledged, it shall be my present Business to consider *how* to free ourselves from the wretched Condition we are avowedly in, and *how* we may *restore* ourselves to the original State we were designed for, the Happiness and Glory for which we were created. For *this* Christianity was intended, *this* is the true Object of the Gospel, *this* is clearly and evidently laid before us, in the infallible *Marks* and *Characters* scattered up and down in our sacred Writings of it, and the *Means* manifestly laid before us, how to make those Characters our own.

This Renewal of our Natures in and under Christ to our original Pretensions, is the great Mystery which had *been bid from Ages and Generations*, but *which* (as the Apostle says) was now, *i. e.* by Christ and the Teachers of his Religion made manifest to his Saints, *i. e.* to those that embrace it; but to very little Purpose handed down to us, in these latter Ages of the World, if we will not, in the same *Apostle's* Words to *Timothy*, lay hold on it.

Our *natural* State must be confess'd, for rational Creatures, to be a very *unnatural* one. We carry about with us a Disinclination to know and acquaint ourselves with the Will of our Creator, and when known and acquainted with, an Aversion to practise it, and make it our Rule of Life. We are under the Vassalage of Sin, the Power of wicked Dispositions, alienated from God, and have a Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Minds, and too often, alas, carrying the Day against it, and subjecting us to its Pleasure. The Consequence of all which in us, is to be *temporal* Death, as it is, and it would have been *eternal* Death, *had not God so loved the World as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

Well, then, let this be considered. As we *are*, we are sinful Creatures, obnoxious to Death and Misery, temporal and eternal. To be *Christians*, is to free ourselves from this our Obnoxiousness to *both*. It is to put ourselves in a Condition to brave both *Death* and *Hell*, and to put us into Possession of the Right of saying with the Apostle, with Spirit and Comfort, "O *Death*, where is thy Sting? O *Grave*, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law, but Thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is this *Victory* which God gives us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by his Ministration and Intercession, over *Death*, and the *Grave*, and *Hell*,

Hell, and the King of it, the *Devil*, that *evil Spirit*, that *worketh* in the *Children of Disobedience*, which a *Man's* being a *Christian* puts him in Possession of. And who is there that hears me that would not be glad to see subdued under him such dreadful, and terrifying Foes?

How ghastly is Death! How loathsome the Grave! And yet it must come to be the Portion of every one of us, and God only knows how soon to any of us, as well as it has overtaken so many that lie around us.—How dreadful and terrifying to look into a Grave, and to see a Corpse *let down* into it? Who can bear the Thoughts that *he himself* must take *his Turn*, must come to be seen by *others* to take *his* Station before them, and be committed to our own common Mother the Earth, from whence our first Parent was taken, a cold Lump of lifeless Clay, *Earth to Earth, Dust to Dust, Ashes to Ashes*, as he sees *others* take *their* Station there before *him*, in the like solemn awful Manner, and his Destiny determined to all Eternity? But what is either *Death* or the *Grave*, (could we bear with Patience the Thought of the *Coe*, or without a secret Horror seizing us, look into the *Other*,) to *that* which must certainly follow it, “If we are not “Christians,” I mean, *Hell*, and the State of the *Damned*?—That *Place*, *where*, in our Saviour's own Words, *The Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched, where there will be weeping and gnashing of Teeth*, without Remission and without End. And in *St. John's*, his beloved Disciple, *The Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, whose Smoke ascendeth up for ever, and for ever*. Or, who is there that can dwell, in the Words of the *Prophet*, with *everlasting Burnings*? Or, stand in their Guilt before that God, who must from the Purity and Holiness of his Nature, as well as from his express Declaration, necessarily be to them a *consuming Fire*!

Who, in his Senses, would not *be* any Thing, and *do* any thing to *avoid* such of these Things as can be *avoided*? Or to *destroy* and render of no Effect those that can *not*.—*Death* and the *Grave* can *not*, but *these* may be rendered ineffectual and made of no Account. For who regards the Loss of himself for a Night's Sleep, when he is sure of waking the following Day? And this is the Case of Death with a *Christian*. It has no more hold of him than a Night's Sleep has. He rests a little from the Cares, and Toils, and Miseries, and Distractions of this Life, and then rises never to die, never to suffer, never so much as to sleep any more. And as to *Hell* and the *Devil*, to a *Christian* they are quite out of the Question, “They never were made for *him*.”

Let no one wonder here, on the one hand, or flatter himself, on the

other, that I put not the Word *true* in, in speaking of a *Christian*, who is to defy Death, the Grave, and *Hell*; for he is not a Christian, who is not a *true* Christian: He is not entitled to the Privileges that Christ purchased for all his faithful Servants, who is not his *faithful* Servant, and no one is a Christian, that is not a *true* Christian. The Name and the outward Profession will be found to go for nothing; it is the Reality, the being a *Christian*, that is to do the Thing, the conforming ourselves to the Performance of those Duties, the Avoidance of those Sins, the being actually endow'd with those Graces and Virtues which our Lord and Master was the great Pattern of, that is required of those who profess themselves Members of his Church, and are to hope at all to be the better for being so.

Were we indeed in that initiatory Ceremony of our holy Religion, *Baptism*, baptized into a Belief *only* of the *Merit* of Christ's Death, to our having Hopes and entertaining Assurances, that God would hereafter receive us to his Mercy, and crown us with Immortality for *his* Sake, let our Lives be led as they might, the Matter would be far otherwise, and little need at any Time be said to those who bear the Name of Christians, to be *such* indeed; Or, if Men, by Virtue of their Christianity, had no relation to a Futurity, much less to an *Eternal* one, and after a short uncertain State of Being, here, were to leave it, and never be heard of any more, the Matter would be much the same. But there is no such Thing. Man-tho' a Mortal is really an immortal Creature. Nor can any Man, at Pleasure, divest himself of all Apprehensions of a *Hereafter*; and for a Man, who is a *Christian*, to pretend to it is a Contradiction. He is baptized into the Belief of an *eternal* one, and renounces his Religion when he but *doubts* of it; as he does his Title to common Sense, while he, as a Christian, believes it, and is *indifferent* about preserving in his Mind a *Sense* of the *Conditions* by which he is to secure to himself a happy Eternity, or when he is well acquainted with them is careless in the performing them. 'Tis from Christ only we are to learn what we *are*, here, and *subject* to, hereafter. He gave sufficient Evidence for the Truth of whatever he told us, and the most undoubted as well as the most interesting of all he told us, is contained in the blessed Assurances of a Restoration to Life through a Resurrection from the Dead, and of a *Life in the World to come*, through his Mediation, to all Eternity. We meet with his, and his Apostles Declarations of *this* in every Page of our holy Writ, of the New Testament, and this was confirmed beyond all Possibility of Doubt or Denial, to a reasonable Mind, by his
OWN

own Resurrection; but neither the one or the other is more certain, than that which the *Apostle* tells us; That Christ is the Author of Salvation to Them, (and give me leave to add, as his Meaning) to Them *only*, who *obey* him.

Christ came to *save* us by refining, and exalting our depraved Nature, to free us from our Corruptions, and to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works; not to dishonour *it*, Himself, and *his*, and (if we please, in and by him) *our* heavenly Father, by giving us the least Encouragement to continue in a State of Disobedience to the holy and dignifying Laws set us by our great Creator, through any thing that he was to *do*, or *suffer* for us in his own Person. And this is so clearly held forth to us all, in the several Offices of our Church of Baptism, Catechizing, Confirmation, and Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, (the several Steps taken towards the building up the Church of God by our holy Mother,) that it is amazing how any one professing himself a Christian, and bidding in his Mind for Immortality, or hoping for Salvation, can pretend to expect Mercy in and thro' Christ when he comes to die, who has not in the Course of his Life endeavoured to acquaint himself with his holy Laws, according to the Abilities and Opportunities he has had of so doing, and sincerely made use of the Methods, by *Watchfulness* and *Prayer*, as well as by Attendance on the outward *Ordinances* of Religion for the due Observance of them; or, if he has had the Misfortune to have fail'd therein, has not timely secured to himself an Interest in his Saviour, by the Method prescribed to him for it, (the blessed News of the Acceptance of which he brought down from Heaven with him,) a *sincere Repentance*—giving the only Evidence thereof, a *real Reformation*. And I desire every one who hears me (*and that reads this*) and deems himself a *Christian*, to ask himself, *How* the Case stands with him in this Respect?—The Matter is of Consequence, and a *Right*, under Christ, to a *happy Immortality*, very well worth our while not to be mistaken in.—

But to proceed,—This then is to be a Christian; To despise Death, and all its Terrors, The Devil, and all his infernal Powers. Death can indeed lay hold of him but cannot *bold* him. The Devil has no Share in him—But this is not all, It is a great Happiness to be free from Pain and Misery, but a Man may be so, and yet not call himself happy. To be *happy* is to be more than not to be miserable; to be everlastingly happy, happy beyond all Expression, infinitely beyond what our highest Wishes or Hopes can at present guess at, is something

for anything more than barely not to be miserable. And this the *Christian* has a Right to entertain the humble Hopes of, as he journeys on in Life towards the heavenly Jerusalem, his final Home.

I would not, by the way, in saying this be thought to countenance the vain idle Doctrine of a necessary, previous, absolute *Assurance*, within every Man, of his Salvation, here, in order to his being entitled to it hereafter; but surely it is in every one's Power, if he will deal honestly with himself, to know as well, "Whether he is *true* and "*faithful* to his *eternal Master*, as to any temporal one whatsoever, "and to have Comfort accordingly."

"Can't a Man tell himself, Whether he sets *God before him*, and "honours his holy Name, his Word, and his Day? Whether he "keeps his Body in Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity? Whether "he is just, and true, in his Dealings? hurts no body by Word or "Deed, or bears no Malice or Hatred in his Heart? Whether he "covets or desires or takes to himself at any time, other Mens Property? Whether he loves his Neighbour as himself, and endeavours "to do unto all Men, as he desires they should do unto him?"—If a Man, on an impartial Survey of his own Behaviour, can answer such *Queries* as these, *uprightly*, tho' he may not be so presumptuous as to think or talk of an *absolute Assurance*, he may assuredly take Comfort from the humble Hopes of being, through *Christ*, in the Favour of *God*, as, on the like conscious dutiful Behaviour any one may of being so, of *Man*. God is a great Master of a great Family, as Man is of a little one, and there is the *same* Rule for the Servants of each to go by, to judge of their Acceptableness, namely, a *conscientious Obedience*, from a Sense of their Master's Inspection, his Reward and Punishment.

But be it with the humble Christian, as it will, the Word of God stands sure,—As soon as Death overtakes him, his Work is at an end, his Danger is over, He has God's Word for it, who can not *lie*, because nothing can resist *his* Power, or make him change his Will.—He has God's own Word, "That he shall, in due time, be raised to "Glory, and be put in Possession of Joys that neither Eye hath seen, "nor Ear heard, nor ever has it, in this low State of Being, entred "into the Heart of Man to conceive any Resemblance of.

WHAT is *here*? Who is there that hears me read these blessed *Promises* that have not their Hearts warmed with them, that do not desire to be put into a Way of making them their own? Why, to *be* a *Christian* is to be put into Possession of them: Be but *Christians* and you enjoy them already. For *Expectation* from God, on God's Word,

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on the Performance of any Condition he requires, is greater *Security* than even actual Possession itself, for any earthly Thing whatsoever.

To be a *Christian*, is to be brought into the comfortable Hopes of enjoying that blessed State, "Where there is Fulness of Joy, and the triumphant Presence of that Being, at whose right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore; where God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and where there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain."

Methinks, on hearing this, all of you should be ready with one Voice to call out upon me to tell you, "Where is this to be come by?" "Where is this to be had?" I answer, once more, "Be but *Christians*, and it is all your own."—Open your *Bibles*, and see. "God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him," (expressing such Belief by his Faithfulness to him) "should not *perish*, but have *everlasting Life*." "The Gift of God is *eternal Life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "We know that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands eternal in the Heavens." "This *Corruptible* shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality."—"When Christ, who is our Life" (that is, the Author of our eternal Life) "shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in Glory." "Christ shall change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself *.

And to name no more, but rather to recommend to you the *turning over* that much neglected *Book* that contains these glorious Soul-ravishing Tidings, and Assurances, from God himself, the Christian's Great Charter, the *Bible*, that lies mould'ring, perhaps, on your Shelves in Dust and Obscurity, to seek them out for your selves, (for many, very many other Passages there are, scatter'd up and down in it, to the same Purpose, which when once you have made yourselves acquainted with and imbibed in your Minds, will be ready Money in Hand to you, and remove at once every Burthen of your Lives, be they ever so miserable,)—To name, myself, therefore no more, let me conclude with those excellent and most comfortable Words of St. *Peter* to a *Christian*, but to none other, "Blessed be the Lord God" "and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abun-

* *John* iii. 16. *Rom.* vii. 23. *2 Cor.* v. 1. *1 Cor.* iii. 4. *Phil.* iii. 21.

“dant Mercy hath begotten us again by the Resurrection of Jesus
 “Christ from the Dead *.”—Begotten us again? To *what*? It fol-
 lows in the next Verse, “To an Inheritance incorruptible, and unde-
 “filed, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the Heavens,”——
 But for *whom*? St. PAUL tells you *that*, “For them, and for them
 “only, who by patient Continuance in *Well-doing*, seek for Glory,
 “Honour, and Immortality †,” that is, “For the Christian,”——
 For the Christian, and for no other all this is—— And who would not
 now be a Christian? a *genuine* Christian, not in Belief, and outward
 Profession only, but in Deed. Not an *almost*, but an *altogether* one,
 —to be entitled to all this; to that blessed Inheritance “That fadeth
 “not away, *on the one hand*, and for neither Death, nor the Grave,
 “nor the Devil to have any Power over him, *on the other*,” But for
these to have no Power over a Man, *Sin* must have no Power over
 him, He must be a CHRISTIAN.

In a Word, I shall end all with laying before you those remarka-
 ble Words of the *two* Great Apostles, containing in them both the *Doc-*
trine and *Application* of all I have been saying in the succinctest and
 clearest Manner, *viz.* § “Know ye not that we who have been bap-
 “tized into Christ, were baptized into his Death, and that we are
 “buried with him by Baptism into Death, that as Christ was raised
 “up from the Dead to the Glory of the Father, even so we also
 “should *walk* in *Newness of Life*.—|| Let not, therefore, *Sin* reign in
 “your mortal Bodies, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof,
 “but rather as *obedient* Children, not fashioning your selves according
 “to the former Lusts, in your *Ignorance*; But as he who hath called
 “you is *Holy*, So be *Ye Holy*, in all manner of Conversation.

• 1 Peter i. 3. † Rom. ii. 7. § Rom. vi. || 1 Peter i.

The END.



